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Claim Amendments

Claims 1-80 (canceled)

Claim 81 (withdrawn): A picking rake for performing raking and picking operations comprising:

- a first and second rake units; and

- the first rake unit having a first rake head and a first rake handle; and

- the second rake unit having a second rake head and a second rake handle; and

- wherein each of the first and second rake heads has a lower end and an upper end; and

- wherein the lower end of each of the rake heads has a plurality of prongs; and

- wherein each rake handle comprises an elongated member having a lower end and an upper end; and

- wherein the lower ends of the first and second rake handles are coupled to the upper ends of the first and second rake heads respectively; and

- connecting means on the rake units for holding and connecting the rake units together comprising a pivotal connection for flexibly and pivotally connecting the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles to a section of the other of the first and second rake handles proximal the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles when the rake units are arranged in a raking position and a picking position; and

wherein the pivotal connection allows motion of the two rake handles in a cycle from the raking position to the picking position and back to the raking position; and

wherein the raking position comprises the rake handles substantially parallel and adjacent each other, the rake heads also adjacent each other, the lower ends of the rake heads aligned forming substantially one functional rake head lying on one plane, at least one rake head contributing to the total raking span; and

wherein the raking operation in the raking position comprises the conventional method of raking debris; and

wherein the motion leading to the picking position comprises a transition operation wherein at least one of the rake handles is separately flexed outwardly to turn about an azimuthal axis substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the rake handles, resulting in the picking position wherein the rake heads are substantially facing each other; and

wherein the picking operation in the picking position comprises swinging at least one of the rake handles alternately inwardly toward and outwardly away from the other rake handle; and

wherein the motion leading back to the raking position comprises the reverse of the transition operation.

Claim 82 (withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 81 wherein the pivotal connection comprises the following or their equivalents:

- a) a first aperture on the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles, and

- b) a second aperture on the other rake handle disposed nearest the first aperture, and
- c) a cord, chain, or equivalent flexible elongated material, and
- d) wherein the flexible elongated material is threaded through the first and second apertures and closed off at each end with a retainer.

Claim 83 (withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 81 wherein the pivotal connection comprises the following or their equivalents:

- a) a chain comprising at least two links, said chain having a first link on one end and a last link on the other end, and
- b) wherein the first link is secured to the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles, and
- c) wherein the last link is secured to a section of the other of the first and second rake handles proximal the first link.

Claim 84 (withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 81 wherein the pivotal connection comprises the following or their equivalents:

- a) a first ring secured to the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles, and
- b) a second ring secured to a section of the other of the first and second rake handles proximal the first ring, and
- c) means for turning at least one of the rings at least substantially 90 degrees freely around the orthogonal cross-sectional perimeter of the handle it is on, and

d) wherein the first ring is linked to the second ring.

Claim 85 (withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 81 wherein the pivotal connection comprises the following or their equivalents:

- a) a first screw eye mounted on the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles, and
- b) a second screw eye mounted on the other of the first and second rake handles closest the first screw eye, and
- c) a first ring linking the first screw eye to the second screw eye.

Claim 86 (withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 81 wherein the pivotal connection comprises the following or their equivalents:

- a) a first aperture on one of the first and second rake handles, and
- b) a second aperture on the other of the first and second rake handles disposed closest to the first aperture, and
- c) a ring of size capable of being loosely threaded to the first and second apertures.

Claim 87 (withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 81

wherein each of the first and second rake heads has a first and second inner side respectively; and

wherein one of the first and second inner sides overlap the other of the first and second inner sides, whereby the other of the first and second inner sides abuts

the overlapping inner side of one of the first and second rake heads.

Claim 88 (previously presented, currently amended): A picking rake for performing raking and picking operations comprising:

a first and second rake units; and

the first rake unit having a first rake head and a first rake handle; and

the second rake unit having a second rake head and a second rake handle; and

wherein each of the first and second rake heads has an external side and an inner side and a lower end and an upper end, wherein the lower ends of the first and second rake heads have a plurality of prongs; and

wherein each of the first and second rake handles has an external side and an inner side; and

wherein the first rake handle comprises a first elongated member and a first hand grip and the second rake handle comprises a second elongated member and a second hand grip; and

wherein each of the first and second elongated members has a lower end and an upper end; and

wherein the lower ends of the first and second elongated members are coupled to the upper ends of their respective rake heads; and

wherein the first and second hand grips each comprises a first branch extending substantially transversely outwardly from their respective elongated members at a section intermediate the upper ends of their respective rake heads and the upper ends of their respective elongated members; and

connecting means on at least one of the rake units for keeping the rake heads together during the raking operation and apart during the picking operation; and

wherein the raking operation substantially comprises a conventional method of raking; and

wherein the elongated members sweep a raking plane during the raking operation; and

wherein said connecting means comprise a gripping connection for joining and abutting the two rake units towards the inner sides of the rake heads, the handles substantially parallel and next to each other, side-by-side along their inner sides on a first plane, the lower ends of the rake heads aligned forming substantially one functional rake head also on the first plane, at least one rake head contributing to the total raking span when the picking rake is performing the raking operation; and

wherein the gripping connection comprises a resilient member ~~or equivalent~~ disposed on one of the first and second rake handles; and

wherein the resilient member has an opening capable of receiving the outer dimensions of an adjacent section of the other of the first and second rake handles; and

wherein the resilient member is snapped onto the other of the first and second rake handles in an inwardly side-directed motion along a gripping plane substantially normal to the raking plane when the rake heads are joined together for raking; and

wherein the resilient member is snapped off the other of the first and second rake handles in an outwardly side-directed motion along the gripping plane substantially normal to the raking plane when the rake heads are parted for picking; and

wherein the picking operation comprises the first and second hand grips and the first and second rake heads substantially facing each other and moving alternately toward and away from each other for grasping and releasing debris respectively between the first and second rake heads.

Claim 89 (canceled)

Claim 90 (previously presented, currently amended): The picking rake in ~~claim 89 wherein the abutment means~~ comprise claim 88 further including a recess disposed on a section of one of the rake handles, the recess sized to snugly receive the inner and outer dimensions of the resilient member.

Claim 91 (previously presented, currently amended): The picking rake in ~~claim 89 wherein the abutment means~~ comprise overlapping rake heads. claim 88 wherein the first and second rake heads overlap towards their inner sides.

Claim 92 (previously presented): The picking rake in claim 88 further including a second branch extending substantially transversely from each of the elongated members at a section intermediate the upper end of the rake heads and the upper end of each of the elongated members and apart from the first branch, the first and second branches providing an arm-leveraged handle during the picking operation.

Claim 93 (previously presented): The picking rake in claim 88 wherein said gripping connection further comprises:

- a) a first aperture on said resilient member,
- b) a second aperture disposed on a predetermined section of the other of the first and second rake handles,
- c) a snap button disposed inside the predetermined section of the other of the first and second rake handles, said snap button having a positioning head, said positioning head outwardly engaged in the second aperture,
- d) wherein the resilient member snaps and holds other of the first and second rake handles, the positioning head further engaging outwardly into the first aperture when the two rake units are joined for raking debris, and
- e) wherein the snap button head is depressed inwardly to disengage from the first aperture when the two rake units are detached for picking debris.

Claim 94 (previously presented): The picking rake in claim 88 wherein one of the first and second elongated members comprises at least two tubes, an inner tube receivable inside an outer tube, and cooperating retaining means to telescope the tubes so that the inner tube can be extended when raking and retracted when picking debris.

Claims 95-98 (canceled)

Claim 99-105 (canceled)

Claim 106(withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 81 wherein the first rake handle has a first portion and the second rake handle has a second portion; and

wherein the connecting means further comprise a resilient member on one of the first and second portions for holding the first and second rake units in the raking position; and

wherein the resilient member is snapped off the other of the first and second portions at the start of the transition operation; and

wherein the resilient member is snapped onto the other of the first and second portions at the end of the reverse of the transition operation.

Claim 107(withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 81 wherein each of the first and second rake handles further includes a hand grip comprising a branch extending substantially transversely outwardly therefrom.

Claim 108(withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 107

wherein the first hand grip has a first portion and the second hand grip has a second portion; and

wherein the connecting means further comprise a resilient member on one of the first and second portions for holding the first and second rake units in the raking position; and

wherein the resilient member is snapped off the other of the first and second portions at the start of the transition operation; and

wherein the resilient member is snapped onto the other of the first and second portions at the end of the reverse of the transition operation.

Claim 109(withdrawn): The picking rake in claim 81

wherein the other of the first and second rake handles comprises at least two tubes, an inner tube receivable inside an outer tube, and cooperating retaining means to telescope the tubes whereby the inner tube can be extended when gathering debris and retracted when picking debris.

Claim 110(previously presented, currently amended): The picking rake in claim 88

wherein said connecting means further comprise ~~securing means for~~ a pivotal connection for flexibly and pivotally holding and connecting the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles to a section of the other of the first and second rake proximal the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles.

Claim 111(previously presented): A picking rake for performing raking and picking operations comprising:

a first and second rake units; and

the first rake unit having a first rake head and a first rake handle; and

the second rake unit having a second rake head and a second rake handle; and

wherein each of the first and second rake heads has an external side and an inner side, a lower end and an upper end, wherein the lower ends of the first and second rake heads have a plurality of prongs; and

wherein each of the first and second rake handles has an external side and an inner side; and

wherein the first rake handle comprises a first elongated member and a first hand grip and the second rake handle comprises a second elongated member and a second hand grip; and

wherein each of the first and second elongated members has a lower end and an upper end; and

wherein the lower ends of the first and second elongated members are coupled to the upper ends of their respective rake heads; and

wherein the first and second hand grips each comprises a first branch extending substantially transversely outwardly from their respective elongated members at a section intermediate the upper ends of their respective rake heads and the upper ends of their respective elongated members; and

connecting means on at least one of the rake units for joining the two rake heads together in a raking position and for parting the two rake heads in a picking position; and

wherein the raking position comprises the rake handles next to each other side-by-side along their inner sides, their longitudinal axes substantially parallel and distinct from each other, the rake heads adjacent each other towards their inner sides, their lower ends aligned forming substantially one functional rake head, at least one rake head contributing to the total raking span; and

wherein the picking position comprises the two rake heads substantially facing each other and the two hand grips substantially facing each other.

Claim 112 (previously presented): The picking rake in claim 111

wherein the raking operation substantially comprises a conventional method of raking; and

wherein the elongated members sweep a raking plane during the conventional method of raking; and

wherein the first rake handle has a first portion and the second rake handle has a second portion, said first and second portions substantially adjacent each other when the rake units are brought next to each other prior to being connected; and

wherein said connecting means comprise a gripping connection on one of the first and second portions comprising a resilient member that snaps onto and holds the other one of the first and second portions in an inwardly side directed motion along a gripping plane substantially normal to the raking plane when the picking rake is used for raking yard debris; and

wherein the resilient member snaps off the other of the first and second portions in an outwardly side directed motion along the gripping plane substantially normal to the raking plane when the rake units are parted for picking yard debris.

Claim 113(previously presented, currently amended): The picking rake in claim 112 ~~further including a securing means disposed on the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles through which a pivotal connection is extended for flexibly and pivotally holding and joining the first and second rake handles.~~ wherein said connecting means further comprise a pivotal connection for flexibly and pivotally holding and joining the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles to an adjacent section of the other of the first and second rake handles.

Claim 114(previously presented): The picking rake in claim 112 further including a second branch extending substantially transversely from each of the elongated

members at a section intermediate the upper end of the rake head and the upper end of the elongated member and apart from the first branch, the first and second branches providing an arm-leveraged handle when the picking rake is used for picking debris.

Claim 115 (previously presented): The picking rake in claim 111 wherein the connecting means comprise:

- a) a tube disposed along the elongated member of one of the first and second rake handles, said tube having a first aperture,
- b) a second aperture disposed on a predetermined section of the elongated member of the other of the first and second rake handles,
- c) a snap button disposed inside the predetermined section of the elongated member of the other of the first and second rake handles, said snap button having a positioning head, the positioning head engaged outwardly of the second aperture,
- d) wherein the tube snugly receives the section of the elongated member of the other of the first and second rake handles when the section is inserted into the tube, the positioning head further engaging outwardly of the first aperture when the rake units are joined for raking debris, and
- e) wherein the snap button head is depressed inwardly from the first aperture while one of the rake handles is pulled out of the tube for picking debris.

Claim 116 (canceled)

Claim 117(previously presented, currently amended): The picking rake in claim 111 ~~further including a securing means disposed on the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles through which a pivotal connection is extended for flexibly and pivotally holding and joining the first and second rake handles.~~ wherein said connecting means comprise a pivotal connection for flexibly and pivotally holding and joining the upper end of one of the first and second rake handles to an adjacent section of the other of the first and second rake handles.

Claim 118(new): A picking rake for performing raking and picking operations comprising:

- a first and second rake units; and

- the first rake unit having a first rake head and a first rake handle; and

- the second rake unit having a second rake head and a second rake handle; and

- wherein each of the first and second rake heads has an external side and an inner side, a lower end and an upper end, wherein the lower ends of the first and second rake heads have a plurality of prongs; and

- wherein each of the first and second rake handles has an external side and an inner side; and

- wherein the first rake handle comprises a first elongated member and a first hand grip and the second rake handle comprises a second elongated member and a second hand grip; and

- wherein each of the first and second elongated members has a lower end and an upper end; and

wherein the lower ends of the first and second elongated members are coupled to the upper ends of their respective rake heads; and

wherein the first and second hand grips each comprises a first branch extending substantially transversely outwardly from their respective elongated members at a section intermediate the upper ends of their respective rake heads and the upper ends of their respective elongated members; and

connecting means on at least one of the rake units for joining the two rake heads together in a raking position and for parting the two rake heads in a picking position; and

wherein the raking position comprises the rake handles next to each other side-by-side along their inner sides, their longitudinal axes substantially parallel and distinct from each other, the rake heads adjacent each other towards their inner sides, their lower ends aligned forming substantially one functional rake head, at least one rake head contributing to the total raking span; and

wherein the picking position comprises the two rake heads substantially facing each other and the two hand grips substantially facing each other; and

wherein the raking operation substantially comprises a conventional method of raking; and

wherein the elongated members sweep a raking plane during the conventional method of raking; and

wherein the first rake handle has a first portion and the second rake handle has a second portion, said first and second portions substantially adjacent each other when the rake units are brought next to each other prior to being connected; and

wherein said connecting means comprise a gripping connection on one of the first and second portions comprising a resilient member that snaps onto and holds the other one of the first and second portions in an inwardly side directed motion along a gripping plane substantially normal to the raking plane when the picking rake is used for raking yard debris; and

wherein the resilient member snaps off the other of the first and second portions in an outwardly side directed motion along the gripping plane substantially normal to the raking plane when the rake units are parted for picking yard debris; and

wherein the rake handles further includes a second branch extending substantially transversely from each of the elongated members at a section intermediate the upper end of the rake head and the upper end of the elongated member and apart from the first branch, the first and second branches providing an arm-leveraged handle when the picking rake is used for picking debris.

Claim 119 (new): A picking rake for performing raking and picking operations comprising:

a first and second rake units; and

the first rake unit having a first rake head and a first rake handle; and

the second rake unit having a second rake head and a second rake handle; and

wherein each of the first and second rake heads has an external side and an inner side and a lower end and an upper end, wherein the lower ends of the first and second rake heads have a plurality of prongs; and

wherein each of the first and second rake handles has an external side and an inner side; and

wherein the first rake handle comprises a first elongated member and a first hand grip and the second rake handle comprises a second elongated member and a second hand grip; and

wherein each of the first and second elongated members has a lower end and an upper end; and

wherein the lower ends of the first and second elongated members are coupled to the upper ends of their respective rake heads; and

wherein the first and second hand grips each comprises a first branch extending substantially transversely outwardly from their respective elongated members at a section intermediate the upper ends of their respective rake heads and the upper ends of their respective elongated members; and

connecting means on at least one of the rake units for keeping the rake heads together during the raking operation and apart during the picking operation; and

wherein the raking operation substantially comprises a conventional method of raking; and

wherein the elongated members sweep a raking plane during the raking operation; and

wherein said connecting means comprise a gripping connection for joining and abutting the two rake units towards the inner sides of the rake heads, the handles substantially parallel and next to each other, side-by-side along their inner sides on a first plane, the lower ends of the rake heads aligned forming substantially one functional rake head also on the first plane, at least one rake head

contributing to the total raking span when the picking rake is performing the raking operation; and

wherein the gripping connection comprises a resilient member disposed on one of the first and second rake handles; and

wherein the resilient member has an opening capable of receiving the outer dimensions of an adjacent section of the other of the first and second rake handles; and

wherein the resilient member is snapped onto the other of the first and second rake handles in an inwardly side-directed motion along a gripping plane substantially normal to the raking plane when the rake heads are joined together for raking; and

wherein the resilient member is snapped off the other of the first and second rake handles in an outwardly side-directed motion along the gripping plane substantially normal to the raking plane when the rake heads are parted for picking; and

wherein the picking operation comprises the first and second hand grips and the first and second rake heads substantially facing each other and moving alternately toward and away from each other for grasping and releasing debris respectively between the first and second rake heads; and

wherein the rake handles further includes a second branch extending substantially transversely from each of the elongated members at a section intermediate the upper end of the rake heads and the upper end of each of the elongated members and apart from the first branch, the first and second branches providing an arm-leveraged handle during the picking operation.

Claim 120 (new): The picking rake in claim 119 further including a recess disposed on a section of one of the rake handles, the recess seized to snugly receive the inner and outer dimensions of the resilient member.

Claim 121 (new): The picking rake in claim 119 wherein the first and second rake heads overlap towards their inner sides.

Claim 122 (new): The picking rake in claim 119 wherein said gripping connection further comprises:

- a) a first aperture on said resilient member,
- b) a second aperture disposed on a predetermine section of the other of the first and second rake handles,
- c) a snap button disposed inside the predetermined section of the other of the first and second rake handles, said snap button having a positioning head, said positioning head outwardly engaged in the second aperture,
- d) wherein the resilient member snaps and holds the other of the first and second rake handles, the positioning head further engaging outwardly into the first aperture when the two rake units are joined for raking debris, and
- e) wherein the snap button head is depressed inwardly to disengage from the first aperture when the two rake units are detached for picking debris.

Claim 123 (new): The picking rake in claim 119 wherein one of the first and second elongated members comprises at least two tubes, an inner tube receivable inside an outer

tube, and cooperating retaining means to telescope the tubes so that the inner tube can be extended when raking and retracted when picking debris.

Claim 124(new): The picking rake in claim 119 wherein the resilient member is disposed on one of the first and second branches of one of the first and second rake handles.

Claim 125(new): The picking rake in claim 119 wherein the resilient member is disposed on a section of an elongated member of one of the first and second rake handles, said section proximal one of the first and second branches.

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